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ABSTRACT

The current writing across the curriculum movement has shown educators that the process of composing focuses writers' attention on producing much the same material that reading exercises asked them only to recognize. Two taxonomic structures and a list of Scott, Foresman's reading comprehension skills may be used to help demonstrate the effectiveness of writing as a reading skills activity. Bloom categorized the cognitive skills into a hierarchy of six functional steps. Drawing from Bloom's taxonomy, Guzak arranged reading comprehension skills into five major areas. One means of adapting a writing approach to the extension of a story is to have the students assume the stance of a news reporter and write a news story based on its events. Another way to include both Bloom's and Guzak's arrays is to ask the students to identify with the main characters in a story. A comparison of real and imagined experiences reaches the highest of the thinking skills listed by Bloom and Guzak. Exercises in which children produce contexts rather than respond to small segments of information are more economical of pupil and teacher time. Fewer exercises can result in more learning if children are allowed to use their own ideas and impressions. (DF)

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Writing Skills That Teach Reading

Have teachers become overly dependent on the manuals and workbooks that accompany basal readers? For years, teachers have been slavishly following reading programs that were prearranged and prepackaged by major publishing houses and selected by school administrators, neither of which had to make them work in the classroom.

For the last thirty years reading materials have been increasingly redesigned to conform with technological developments based on studies in linguistics and cybernetics. The material to be learned has been fragmented into isolated phonic skills and taxonomic comprehension levels in accordance with recent developments in psychology. Unfortunately, the resulting educational assessment results do not show that this increasingly fragmented learning has produced better readers than did the older meaning approaches to the teaching of reading.

Because materials were developed to present these phonic skills and taxonomic comprehension levels, the literacy quality of the prose suffered. Compliance with readability formulas forced the prose into choppy sentences and less picturesque vocabulary. As a result, children learn to read from a forced diet of colorless prose and unrelated short-answer questions. For many school children this mechanical approach to reading skills has blunted their desire to read and, as a result, they view reading as an exercise and not a means of communication.

Publisher's rely on Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy for developing comprehension and skill exercises, however, separating these skills piecemeal, has resulted in destroying the gestalt. Children see each facet as an isolated task to be

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completed and forgotten. Most of these exercises demand nothing more than recognition of facts and format. Often the thinking skill for which the exercise was intended is not necessary to complete the answer. In view of the small returns on such a large investment in time and money, shouldn't we consider an alternative method of achieving the desired results?

Fortunately, there is an alternative to the endless worksheets and workbook exercises that tend to dull the senses and make reading a chore. The current Writing Across the Curriculum movement has shown educators that the process of composing focuses the writer's attention on producing much the same (material) that reading exercises asked him only to recognize. Consequently, a writing activity may prove to be a much more productive means of fostering reading skills than the timeworn sheets and skillbooks that have long been a staple of the elementary classroom.

In order to demonstrate the effectiveness of writing as a reading skills activity, this paper presents two taxonomic structures developed by researchers and, following this, a list of reading comprehension skills listed for the Scott, Foresman reading series (Guzak, 1972).

Bloom (1956) categorized the cognitive skills into a hierarchy of six functional steps and Guzak (1972) arranged reading comprehension skills into five major areas based on Bloom's hierarchy.

Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

Cognitive Domain

1. Knowledge

Knowledge includes ideas, material, phenomena which can be remembered, The student can store these facts in his mind as information which can

be recalled. This information may be in the form of:

(1) terminology as for verbal and non-verbal symbols; (2) specific facts such as dates, names and places; (3) methods of dealing with facts; (4) conventions and rules (5) processes, sets and arrangements; (6) categories and criteria; (7) methodology; (8) principles and generalizations; (9) theories and structures

Vocabulary for questions to elicit factual knowledge:

-what is (are); where is (are); who is (are); which is (are); when is (are); name; label; list; tell when; locate; define; categories; order.

2. Comprehension

Comprehension involves the use and rearrangement of the information known; students make use of their store of factual knowledge. Students will understand the message imparted so they can translate to a form useful to the task at hand. This will result in the ability to interpret what is read and to extrapolate ideas beyond the written word.

Vocabulary for questions to elicit comprehension:

-tell in your own words; write what you think; show how; interpret; expand; describe; what would happen next or what would happen if.

3. Application

Application requires the student to demonstrate his ability to use the information gained in a novel situation, unassisted.

Vocabulary for questions to elicit application:

-solve the problem; find how; based on what you read, how would you; choose between; which way would you do; how would you use?

4. Analysis:

Analysis of written material refers to the understanding of the relationships among the parts or ideas conveyed and the ability to recognize the ways in which these affect the interpretation.

Vocabulary for questions to elicit application:

-differentiate among ideas; identify the ways of telling; what persuation is the writer; distinguish among; what makes you think so; why did the author write that; is this real or fictitious; are these arguments valid.

5. Synthesis:

Synthesis refers to the combining and assembling of elements gleaned from the experience at hand in a new way to form a novel yet well integrated whole. This involves creative behavior on the part of the learner.

Vocabulary for questions to elicit synthesis are:

-reassemble so that; organize these ideas so they show; write your own using; plan how we would; make a device to; what combinations of these ideas show.

6. Evaluation

Evaluation denotes a useful judgement of value based on standards, either personal or imposed by an outside source. This is highest in the taxonomy because it should involve all the five previous stages of thinking behavior.

Vocabulary for questions to elicit evaluation:

-is this accurate; by what criteria would you judge; how would you like to be; how does this make you feel; should he/she have done...

Guzak (1972) patterned the specific comprehension skills under five major Leadings, congruent with Blooms Taxonomy. These are shown on the next page.

Each publisher uses its own skill array and, according to Guzak (1972), these skills are so numerous that, to follow the array, results in a series of questions based on minutia rather than an in-depth story analysis. Scott-Foresman's skills are listed here:

A CHECKLIST OF READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS

Identifying the meaning of a word or phrase in specific context

Identifying story problem

Making and checking inferences about what is read

Grasping implied ideas

Anticipating action or outcome in a story

Perceiving relationships (analogous, cause-effect, general-specific, class, sequence, time, place, or space, size)

Forming sensory images (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile)

Sensing emotional reactions and inferring motives of story characters

Evaluating actions and personal traits of story characters

Following story sequence and plot

Recognizing plot structure

Comparing and contrasting

Interpreting figurative, idiomatic, and picturesque language

Identifying elements of style

Making judgments and drawing conclusions

Identifying author's purpose or point of view

Comprehending author's meaning

COMPREHENSION

PREDICTING/EXTENDING

Predicts convergent outcomes from:
- pictures
- picture and title
- title
- oral description
- story situations

Predicts divergent outcomes

Explain story character actions

Explaining why story characters hold certain viewpoints

Labeling the feelings of characters

Explaining the operations of gadgets in a story (when such explanations are not provided in the context

Restorying omitted words in context (cloze items)

LOCATING INFORMATION

Locates specifics within written materials:
- phrases
- sentences
- paragraphs
- page numbers
- parts of a story (beginning, middle, end,etc.)

Locates information using book parts:
- titles
- stories
- the preface
- the introduction
- publishing information
- lists of illustrations
- specific chapters
- indexes
- bibliographies
- footnotes
- glossaries
- appendix

Locates information with reference aids:
- dictionaries
- encyclopedias
- atlases
- maps
- globes
- telephone books
- directories

REMEMBERING

Remembering simple sentence content

Remembering the content of two or more simple sentences in sequence

Remembering the factual content of complete and complex sentences and sentence sets

Remembering paragraph content

Remembering story content

ORGANIZING

Translates the story into a different form
- paraphrase
- summary
- synopsis

Retells:
- sentence
- sentence set
- paragraph
- story

Outlines orally the sequence of the story

Reorganizes a communication into a:
- cartoon
- picture
- picture sequence
- graphic design
- formula (boy+ motorcycle= trouble)

EVALUATING CRITICALLY

Makes judgments about the desirability of a:
- character
- situation

Makes judgments about the validity of a:
- story
- description
- argument, etc.

by making both external and internal comparison for consistency, logic, etc.

Making judgments about whether stories are fictional or non-fictional by noting:
- reality
- fantasy
- exaggeration

Making judgments about the author's purpose

Organizing and summarizing ideas

Generalizing

Reacting to story content, linking it to personal experience, and applying ideas gained through reading

Using aids to memory:

- Association
- Sensory imagery
- Sequence
- Cause-effect relationships
- Size relationships
- Organization of ideas

Achieving effective oral interpretation, including sensitivity to pitch, intonation, stress, and rate

One means of adapting a writing approach to the extension of a story is to have the students assume the stance of a news reporter and write a news story based on its events. For example, The Eleven O'Clock Storyland News report, uses all six steps of Bloom's hierarchy of cognition.

The Eleven O'Clock Storyland News

(featuring anchorwoman Laurie Ann Guernic)

"Good evening, and thank you for watching the Monday Night News. Our top story tonight concerns the series of break-ins that have terrorized the Enchanted Forest section of Storyland. Police today apprehended a suspect whom they believe to be responsible for acts of vandalism in the normally quiet neighborhood."

"Apparently the suspect was found by the residents themselves when they returned from an afternoon out. Upon entering their home, they found numerous items disturbed in the house and immediately contacted the authorities. Police labs are currently examining the dinner the family had prepared for signs of possible poisoning, as it was found tampered with."

"A few pieces of furniture in the living room were vandalized, allegedly before the suspect went upstairs to the bedrooms, where the child located her. The suspect's identification is being withheld pending notification of her attorneys."

"A police spokesman commented that this incident seems to be unrelated to the theft of the pigs last week by Tom Tom, the Piper's Son, in a nearby section of town."

"Stay tuned for more details as we get them."

-Laurie Guernic

First, in order to undertake what amounts to a summary of events, the student had to read, recognize and remember the facts in their proper order. Second, this assignment required the ability to translate the facts into another language form. Third, the student applied the information to another expository form, that of a news broadcast. This is not a simple retelling of the story, but involved the selection of those parts that highlight the urgency of the situation. These highlights were based on the student's ability to analyze the elements of the story and to relate them in the most effective way. Bloom (1956) states that synthesis requires the ability to assemble separate parts to form a new whole.

This newscast required the synthesis of the selected elements into another literary form.

This news report is strongest in the two most difficult levels of the Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), application and synthesis. The student was able to separate the integral parts and select and compile them into a reasonable collection of the facts and this was recast into a totally different perspective.

This new perspective gives the reader a much different Goldilocks. We've always read or heard this story from Goldilock's perspective. Here we have a different and perhaps fairer point of view. Goldilocks was, in fact, the intruder. The poor bears for centuries have been unfairly maligned. The fact that the student was able to discern and describe the plight of the bears is evaluation in itself.

The second selection presents a sequel to Goldilocks and the Three Bears. This story was written by a much younger child, however, many of the same understandings are required although not on the same philosophical level as the news report.

Goldilock's Revenge

Goldilocks woke up early one morning and decided that she must have revenge on the three bears for scaring her. At eight she mailed a letter to her friends, the three pigs. The letter read:

Dear Curly, Moe and Stuart,

I have decided to get back at the three bears and I need your help. Meet me at the great oak tree tomorrow. The next day, Goldilocks met the three pigs on time at the great oak. Goldilocks

said, "Curly, Moe and Stuart, tomorrow we're leaving for the bears' house. We will reach there at noon and attack with rotten pumpkins, tomatoes, and stink cabbages."

The next morning, at 11:57 a.m. Goldilocks and company reached the bears' property. They were waiting at the bottom of a short hill for the right time to attack. Meanwhile inside the bears' house, Mama Bear just finished baking pies for the festival in town. She brought the pies to the windowsills to let the pies cool off.

Papa Bear and Baby Bear were in the den reading the comics in the daily newspaper. Then suddenly Papa and Baby Bear heard a scream that came from out the kitchen. It was Mama Bear.

When the two got there, they saw Mama lying on the floor with a rotten pumpkin shell on her head. Goldilocks had attacked. Curly, Moe, Stuart and Goldilocks were throwing stuff in the house at the bears.

Papa Bear thought of an idea to defend themselves. The bears started throwing pies. Two of the pies hit Curly and Stuart and another pie hit Goldilocks in the kneecap and neck.

The battle went on for ten minutes until Goldilocks ran out of things to throw. The bears yelled at the four sloppy-looking objects.

Papa Bear said, "Why do you attack our home?"

Goldilocks wiped the pie cream out of her mouth and said, "When I was here last, you scared me and so I wanted revenge." Baby Bear said, "You scared us, too."

The two groups apologized and Mama Bear said, "Let's have some pie."

They laughed and hit Mama Bear in the face with a pie. From that day on, they were the best of friends.

Another way to include both Blooms (1956) and Guzaks (1972) skills arrays is to ask the students to identify with the main characters in a story. The following exercise is based on the old fable Lazy Jack, but it can be applied to almost any story that has a central character.

This exercise can be done orally, in small groups, or with the class as a whole. It provides for varying levels and experiences within the class. It could be adapted to almost any grade level according to the story and the readers.

Lazy Jack

Once upon a time there was a boy whose name was Jack, and he lived with his mother on a common. They were very poor, and the old woman got her living by spinning, but Jack was so lazy that he would do nothing but bask in the sun in the hot weather, and sit by the corner of the hearth in the winter-time. So they called him Lazy Jack. His mother could not get him to do anything for her, and at last told him one Monday, that if he did not begin to work for his porridge she would turn him out to get his living as he could.

This roused Jack, and he went out and hired himself for the next day to a neighboring farmer for a penny; but as he was coming home, never having had any money before, he lost it in passing over a brook.

"You stupid boy," said his mother, "you should have put it in your pocket."

"I'll do so another time," replied Jack.

Well, the next day, Jack went out again and hired himself to a cowkeeper, who gave him a jar of milk for his day's work. Jack took the jar and put it into the large pocket of his jacket, spilling it all, long before he got home.

"Dear me!" said the old woman; "you should have carried it on your head."

"I'll do so another time," said Jack. So the following day, Jack hired himself again to a farmer, who agreed to give him a cream cheese for his services. In the evening Jack took the cheese, and went home with it on his head. By the time he got home the cheese was all spoilt, part of it being lost, and part matted with his hair.

"You stupid lout," said his mother, "you should have carried it very carefully in your hands."

"I'll do so another time," replied Jack.

Now the next day, Lazy Jack again went out, and hired himself to a baker, who would give him nothing for his work but a large tom-cat. Jack took the cat, and began carrying it very carefully in his hands, but in a short time pussy scratched him so much that he was compelled to let it go.

When he got home, his mother said to him, "You silly fellow, you should have tied it with a string, and dragged it along after you."

"I'll do so another time," said Jack.

So on the following day, Jack hired himself to a butcher, who rewarded him by the handsome present of a shoulder of mutton. Jack took the mutton, tied it to a string, and trailed it along after him in the dirt, so that by the time he had got home the meat was completely spoilt. His mother was this time quite out of patience with him, for the next day was Sunday, and she was obliged to do with cabbage for her dinner.

"You ninney-hammer," said she to her son; "you should have carried it on your shoulder."

I'll do so another time, "replied Jack.

Well, on the Monday, Lazy Jack went once more, and hired himself to a cattlekeeper, who gave him a donkey for his trouble. Now though Jack was strong he found it hard to hoist the donkey on his shoulders, but at last he did it, and began walking home slowly with his prize. Now it so happened that in the course of his journey he passed a house where a rich man lived with his only daughter, a beautiful girl, who was deaf and dumb. And she had never laughed in her life, and the doctors said she would never speak till somebody made her laugh. So the father had given out that any man who made her laugh would receive her hand in marriage.

Now this young lady happened to be looking out of the window when Jack was passing by with the donkey on his shoulders; and the poor beast with its legs sticking up in the air was kicking violently and hee-hawing with all its might. Well, the sight was so comical that she burst out into a great fit of laughter, and immediately recovered her speech and hearing. Her father was overjoyed, and fulfilled his promise by marrying her to Lazy Jack, who was thus made a rich gentleman. They lived in a large house, and Jack's mother lived with them in great happiness until she died.

STORY CHECKLIST

Put a check in the column marked "yes" if you are the same as Jack. If you are not the same as Jack is, tell how you are different.

	Yes	No. I am different in this way.
1. The name is "Jack".		
2. He lives with his mother.		
3. Jack is lazy.		
4. Jack likes to sit in the sun.		
5. Jack likes to sit by the hearth in winter.		
6. Jack has a nickname, Lazy Jack.		
7. Jack does not help his mother.		
8. Jack eats porridge for almost every meal.		
9. Jack does jobs for a farmer.		
10. Jack earns a penny a day.		
11. Jack's mother called him "stupid".		

12. Jack did not save his money.

13. Jack carried milk in his pocket.

14. Jack put cheese in his hair.

15. Jack was scratched by a cat.

16. Jack's mother cooked cabbage for dinner.

17. Jack's mother called him a ninny hammer.

18. Jack carried a donkey on his shoulder.

19. Jack made somebody laugh.

20. Jack is happy.

21. Jack is rich.

By comparing Jack's life to their own, children can learn to relate vicarious experiences to their own situations. The resulting descriptions will be as extensive and detailed as the children envision them, thus, the teacher can judge the background and reasoning ability of each child without singling the responses out as "wrong" or "right".

Furthermore, children who are familiar with this type of exercise can adapt it to other stories or to accounts of historic characters and events. In this way, children of varying abilities can complete such assignments for homework exercises and later can compare their work in group situations. This format will enable teachers to judge levels of comprehension and assess needs for further explanation without singling out some children for repetitive and distasteful remedial work.

A comparison of real and imagined experiences reaches the highest of the thinking skills listed by Bloom (1956) and Guzak (1972). Questions such as, "Could you have done that? Why or why not?" and "Would you have done that?" are evaluative and force the reader to examine the inferences gleaned from the story on every level. Quite often, the only difference between a good answer and a poor one is the language used to state it. Oral discussions emanating from the pooling of answers will help those who need help with stating their ideas effectively. Vocabulary can be developed in the resulting discussion.

Exercises in which children produce contexts rather than respond to small segments of information are much more economical of both teacher and pupil time and effort when compared on a skills array such as the

taxonomies provide. Fewer exercises can result in more learning if the children are allowed to use their own ideas and impressions rather than those totally directed toward a few predetermined answers.

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